

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 191400Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2513
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 9266

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR SO ET
SUBJECT: HARROP MEETING WITH MFA OFFICIALS

REF: ROME 9174

1. SUMMARY: IN HOUR LONG MAY 18 MEETING AT MFA WITH DEPUTY DIRECTOR
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BOTTAI AND OFFICE CHIEF AFRICAN AFFAIRS
RACHELE, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARROP TOURED AFRICAN HORIZON.
HARROP BRIEFED ITALIANS EXTENSIVELY ON U.S. VIEWS OF SITUATIONS ON
THE HORN, RHODESIA, NAMIBIA AND ANGOLA AND ELICITED ITALIAN
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PERCEPTIONS. FOLLOWING ITALIAN OBSERVATIONS (SOME OF WHICH
PREVIOUSLY REPORTED REFTEL) WERE OF INTEREST. END SUMMARY.

2. THE HORN. BOTTAI SAID THE GOI VIEWED "CONTINUING TENSION" IN
BOTH ERITREA AND DJIBOUTI WITH CONCERN. THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE
OF "EVEN A TRUCE" POSSIBLE BETWEEN ADDIS ABABA AND MOGADISCIO. THE
GOI IS TRYING TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH BOTH SIDES IN THE

STRUGGLE, BELIEVING THAT IT IS EASIER FOR THEM TO CARRY ON A DIALOGUE WITH ITALY THAN WITH OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. THAT WAS THE POLITICAL MEANING OF THE RECENT VISITS OF MFA UNDERSECRETARIES RADI AND FOSCHI TO THE TWO HORN CAPITALS. THE SITUATION FOR ITALIANS IS "PARTICULARLY DELICATE" IN ETHIOPIA WHERE THERE IS STILL A LARGE ITALIAN POPULATION, 60 PERCENT OF WHICH LIVES IN ADDIS ABABA, 40 PERCENT OF WHICH IN ERITREA. THERE ARE ABOUT 1,000 ITALIANS LIVING IN ASMARA ALONE. THE UNDER SECRETARIES' MISSIONS WERE DESIGNED TO BUILD UP THE BASE OF COOPERATION BETWEEN ITALY AND THE TWO ADVERSARIES, "TO GIVE CONTENT TO THE POLICY OF DIALOGUE." IN ETHIOPIA THE ITALIANS HAD A SENSE OF THE CLEAR PRESENCE OF NATIONALIST TENDENCIES THAT MIGHT WORK TOWARD GREATER RESISTENCE TO SOVIET INFLUENCE. THEIR OBJECTIVES IN ETHIOPIA WERE FIRST OF ALL TO TRY TO PUT THE PROBLEMS OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNITY INTO THE CONTEXT OF TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION. THE ETHIOPIAN REACTION WAS ENCOURAGING. FOR THE FIRST TIME THEY ACCEPTED MENTION IN THE COMMUNIQUE OF ENGAGEMENTS TOWARD THE ITALIAN COMMUNITY OF ETHIOPIA. THE ITALIAN MISSION IDENTIFIED SOME AREAS OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION AND MADE SOME OFFERS OF CREDIT FACILITIES, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND HEALTH. THE LEVEL OF COOPERATION PLANNED WITH ETHIOPIA WILL PLACE IT VERY HIGH ON THE ITALIAN LIST OF AFRICAN PRIORITIES. THE ETHIOPIANS WERE PARTICULARLY GRATIFIED, BOTTAI SAID, WITH THE "FIRST MISSION OF ITS KIND" FROM WESTERN EUROPE. HE ADDED THAT THE MISSION WAS PERMITTED TO TRAVEL FREELY, ALTHOUGH IT ONLY VISITED THE SOUTH IN VIEW OF ITS SHORT STAY.

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3. ACCORDING TO BOTTAI, UNDERSECRETARY RADI HAD HAD STRESSED TO HIM BY HIS ETHIOPIAN INTERLOCUTORS THAT THEIR BASIC POLICY OBJECTIVE IS NONALIGNMENT, AND THAT THEIR RELIANCE ON THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA HAD BEEN FORCED UPON THEM BY THE INDIFFERENCE OF OTHER COUNTRIES. HARROP OBSERVED THAT IT WAS COMMON PRIVATE LINE TAKEN BY THE ETHIOPIANS WHO EXPRESSED THEIR POSITION QUITE DIFFERENTLY IN PUBLIC. BOTTAI AGREED AND ADDED THAT IN PRACTICE THE LINKS BETWEEN ADDIS ABABA AND MOSCOW AND HAVANA WERE STRONGER THAN EVER. RACHELE THOUGHT IT WAS SIGNIFICANT THAT MENGISTU'S SPEECH IN JIGJIGA (AND HIS TALKS WITH RADI) DID NOT LINGER ON THE "NATO CONSPIRACY" BUT TOOK THE ARABS TO TASK, ACKNOWLEDGING ONLY LIBYA AND SOUTH YEMEN AS SUPPORTIVE OF ETHIOPIAN OBJECTIVES, AND LUMPING MOST OF THE RADICAL ARABS WITH THE MODERATES.

4. ERITREA: IT WAS STILL NOT CLEAR, SAID RACHELE, TO WHAT EXTENT THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS WERE ENGAGED IN ERITREA OR WHETHER THEY WILL PARTICIPATE DIRECTLY IN THE ANNOUNCED OFFENSIVE. THERE ARE APPARENTLY SOME CUBANS WITH ETHIOPIAN UNITS ALONG THE BORDER WITH SUDAN, AND HE ESTIMATED 2-3,000 CUBANS IN ASMARA, 500 IN MASAWA AND POSSIBLY A SUBSTANTIAL GARRISON ON THE ISLANDS OFF MASAWA.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 9266

RACHELE AGREED WITH HARROP'S IMPRESSION THAT CUBANS WERE NOT NOW
ASSIGNED IN ETHIOPIAN COMBAT UNITS IN ERITREA. RACHELE OFFERED
THAT ETHIOPIA WAS TYPICALLY CRITICAL OF THE SUDAN DURING THE RADI
VISIT. THE ATTITUDE WAS OF COURSE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE ERITREAN
SITUATION. THE NINE POINTS OF THE ETHIOPIAN OFFER ON ERITREA DO
NOT REPRESENT A BASIS FOR SERIOUS BARGAINING. THEY OFFER ONLY
PROCEDURES AND THOUGH THEY CONTAIN REFERENCES TO SELF-DETERMINATION
IT IS IN A CONTEXT WHICH DOES NOT OFFER AUTONOMY. AS TO THE ANNOUNCED
ERITREAN OFFENSIVE, THE GOI IS NOT SURE IT HAS REALLY STARTED.
THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE OF TROOP MOVEMENTS, SOME FIGHTING IN
VILLAGES AROUND ASMARA, AND APPARENTLY SOME AIRCRAFT BOMBING
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ATTACKS, BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT ANY VILLAGES HAVE BEEN

RETAKEN FROM THE INSURGENTS.

5. RACHELE NOTED THAT THE ADDIS GOVERNMENT WAS NOW SELLING THE OGADEN VICTORY AS ITS OWN. THE MENGISTU GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO HAVE CLEAR CONTROL IN ADDIS ABABA WHERE LIFE IS VIRTUALLY BACK TO "NORMAL." THEY WERE, HOWEVER, STILL NERVOUS ABOUT SOMALI INTENTIONS AND ABOUT DJIBOUTI.

6. AS FOR SOMALIA, RACHELE SAID THAT THERE WAS PROBABLY NOT MUCH SOMALI SUPPORT GOING INTO THE OGADEN. MOST OGADENI LIBERATION MOVEMENTS WERE FAIRLY SELF-SUFFICIENT ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTH. HOWEVER, THE WSLF, THE STRUCTURE OF WHICH WAS CRATED IN MOGADISCIO, RELIES MORE ON SOMALI HELP BUT IT IS NOT NOW VERY ACTIVE. BOTTAI SUGGESTED THAT THOUGH IT WAS NOW PREMATURE, IN THE LONGER TERM THE DEFINITION OF SO FAR UNDELINEATED BORDERS MIGHT PROVIDE A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE HORN.

7. HARROP ASKED WHETHER FOSCHI'S MISSION TO MOGADISCIO HAD RAISED POSSIBLE GOI MILITARY AID. RACHELE ASSERTED "IT HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED MUCH". TRADITIONAL ITALIAN AID PROGRAMS TO THE SOMALI POLICE WERE TO BE INCREASED A BIT. THERE WAS A PROGRAM INVOLVING PROVISION OF FIAT TRUCKS TO SOMALIA; SOME OF THEM WERE TO GO TO THE POLICE. THOSE TRUCKS WERE NOT ARMORED CARS, "BUT SOMETHING IN BETWEEN." THE MISSION TO MOGADISCIO WAS PRIMARILY AIMED AT FINDING SOME AREAS IN WHICH THE GOI COULD REPLACE THE AID FORMERLY PROVIDED BY THE USSR. FOR EXAMPLE, ITALY WOULD PROVIDE PROFESSORS TO TEACH AT THE UNIVERSITY IN MOGADISCIO--FOR A SEMESTER DESIGNED FOR STUDENTS RETURNED FROM THE SOVIET UNION--AND PROVIDE MORE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SOMALIS IN ITALY. ITALY WAS ALSO LOOKING AT SOME TECHNICAL AID PROJECTS IN WHICH THE USSR WAS FORMERLY INVOLVED.

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8. AFRICA SOUTH. THE ITALIANS AGREED WITH HARROP'S ASSESSMENT THAT THE INTERNAL AGREEMENT WOULD NOT LIKELY HOLD IN RHODESIA, AND CONCURRED THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR SOUTH AFRICA TO PUT PRESSURE ON SMITH.

9. ON ANGOLA, HARROP EXPRESSED THE DEPARTMENT'S GRATITUDE FOR THE ASSISTANCE RECEIVED FROM AMBASSADOR VECCHI IN FACILITATING COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE IMPRISONED U.S. CITIZEN MERCENARIES AND THEIR FAMILIES AS WELL AS IN THE CASE OF THE RELEASE OF THE IMPOUNDED AIRCRAFT. THE ITALIANS ASSERTED THE CONTINUING WILLINGNESS OF THE MFA TO HELP IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE IN ANGOLA.

10. ON THE INTERNAL SITUATION, RACHELE SAID THAT NETO SEEMS CLEARLY IN CONTROL IN LUANDA AT LEAST. IF HE GOES, THERE IS NO ASSURANCE THERE WILL NOT BE A STRUGGLE FOR POWER BETWEEN THE MODERATE MULATTOES AND THE MORE RADICAL BLACKS. IT SEEMS CERTAIN

THAT NETO WAS NOT IN GOOD HEALTH WHEN HE WENT TO MOSCOW, BUT HE HAS APPARENTLY RECOVERED FOR WHATEVER ILLNESS HE HAD. THE BASIC PROBLEM IN ANGOLA IS A PERSISTENT LACK OF PLANNING. THE GOVERNMENT OPERATES ON EMERGENCY MEASURES ALONE. THIS WAS TRUE WHEN UNDER-SECRETARY RADI VISITED THERE LAST YEAR AND IS STILL TRUE. THERE IS A DISTINCT DIFFERENCE THERE BETWEEN THE ANGOLAN AND ETHIOPIAN SITUATION. IN ADDIS ABABA THERE IS A BUREAUCRACY, IDEOLOGICALLY MARXIST (MORE SO, HE SUGGESTED, THAN THE DIRG ITSELF), BUT WITH SOME TRADITION, WITH WHOM IT IS POSSIBLE TO TALK. SUCH IS NOT THE CASE IN LUANDA.

11 RESPONDING TO HARROP'S QUESTION, BOTTAI SAID HE SAW NO INDICATION THAT CASTRO MIGHT BE CHANGING HIS VIEW OF CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA. RACHELE AGREED THAT MAINTAINING A LARGE FORCE IN AFRICA WAS A HEAVY BURDN AND ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH THE SITUATION IN ANGOLA SEEMS FAIRLY STABLE AT THE MOMENT THERE ARE STEADY CUBAN LOSSES (PARTICULARLY NOW WITH A CAMPAIGN AGAINST UNITA) WHICH MUST BE CAUSING CASTRO PUBLIC OPINION PROBLEMS AT HOME. THE CUBANS ARE HAVING REAL PROBLEMS ON THE ISSUES OF PARTICIPATING IN THE ERITREAN CAMPAIGN. THEY ARE UNDER HEAVY CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESSURE FROM SOME OF THE ARABS, PARTICULARLY IRAQ. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR TO WHAT EXTENT THE CUBANS ARE INVOLVED IN THE SHABA AFFAIR.

12. THE NEW GROUP IN THE COMOROS ISLANDS SEEMS MORE CONSERVATIVE, RACHELE OBSERVED. CERTAINLY THE FRENCH ARE SATISFIED. THERE IS AN ITALIAN MEDICAL TEAM IN THE CAPITAL CITY PRACTICALLY RUNNING THE HOSPITAL. GARDNER

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